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THE REGIONAL COMMAND OF THE IRAQI BA'ATH  
(JULY 1968 - JULY 1969)

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RESEARCH DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath  
(July 1968 - July 1969)

I. Introduction

The Ba'ath Party in Iraq first came to power as the result of the coup of February 1963 in which Abdel Kerim Qasim was overthrown and assassinated, and it held office for some nine months before being ousted by the man whom it had chosen as its figurehead, President Abdel Salam Aref. The Ba'ath boasted that its eclipse would be of short duration, and that it would soon return to power, but in the event it had to wait nearly five years, until July 1968.

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try and place the present regime in its proper perspective against the background of Iraqi politics, to discover in what ways it resembles or differs from its predecessor, to examine its ideology, methods and party organisation and finally, to decide whether in fact the Party has a political viability of its own, or whether it merely affords political cover for a group of opportunist and not very united army officers.

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II. The Background to the Coup of July 1968.

3. Its nine months in power in 1963 showed clearly how little genuine support it was able to command in the country as a whole, and how far it was from being able to maintain even a semblance of unity. For this there were a number of reasons - the peculiarities of the party organisation which placed a premium on secretiveness and elitism, its pan-Arabism as opposed to Iraqi nationalism, the strong contrast between its democratic and even liberal ideologies and its authoritarian and repressive methods of rule, its nepotism, corruption and lack of administrative ability, and its use of violence and of the National Guard for purpose of paying off old scores and of maintaining itself in power.

4. By the time it fell it had probably achieved the distinction of having been the most unpopular régime ever to have governed Iraq, and President Aref who, whatever else his weaknesses and failures, had a remarkable understanding of the foibles and characteristics of the men with whom he had to deal, coupled with a real flair for political intrigue, had little difficulty in getting rid of a régime which was not only detested, but had also been hopelessly weakened by its own dissensions.



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5. The Ba'ath which was ousted in the "apostasy" of November, 1963<sup>(1)</sup> was no longer a united party, and the split which first appeared during its months in power was deepened even further during the period of "negative militancy" covering the years between 1964 and 1968. By the beginning of 1967 it was possible to distinguish three separate Ba'ath groups in Iraq - the right-wing Ba'ath, consisting mainly of old guard Ba'athists still in relationship with the International Command, thus enabling them to entitle themselves the Regional Ba'ath (Al Hizb al Ba'ath fi Qutr al-Iraq), a left-wing group, Marxist and pro-Syrian in ideology (Al Ba'ath al Yasiri), and a much smaller, extremist group, of which the leading personality was Ali Saleh al Saadi, whose gangsterist methods as Deputy Prime Minister and boss of the National Guard in 1963 had contributed greatly to the fall of the regime. It was the first of these, the

(1) Two such "apostasies" have taken <sup>their</sup> place in the canon of current right-wing Ba'ath political jargon - that of 18 November, 1963 resulting in the fall and disintegration of the Party in Iraq, and that of 23 February, 1966, in which Hafiz al Amin's regime in Syria was overthrown in the coup led by Saleh al Jedid.

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right-wing Ba'ath, which participated in the coup of 17 July, 1968, and then itself carried out the further coup of 30 July; and while it has some claim to be regarded as representative of orthodox Ba'athism, it is noticeable that, as happened with previous Ba'ath regimes, both in Iraq and Syria, the expediencies of the exercise of power have frequently made nonsense of party doctrine.

III. The Coups of July, 1968.

6. On 17 July, 1968 a number of officers known as the "Palace Group", allegedly also members of the Arab Revolutionary Movement, in conjunction with a number of right-wing Ba'athists carried out a bloodless coup which resulted in the deposition and exile of President Abdel Rahman Aref. The part played by the officers was underlined by the appointment of one of their number, Colonel Abdel Razzag Nayef (Deputy Director of Military Intelligence) as Prime Minister, and of another, Lt.-Colonel Ibrahim Abdel Rahman Daud (O.C. Republican Guard Brigade) as Minister of Defence. The Presidency went to a veteran Ba'athist, General Ahmed Hassan <sup>al</sup> Bakr, who had been Prime Minister in 1963, and the Ministry of the Interior to another, General Saleh Mehdi Ammash. The key posts in the Government

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were thus allotted to the planners of the 17 July coup, the remainder being given in the main to professionals who were experts in their respective spheres, Salih Kubba at the Ministry of Finance, Nasr al Hani at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mahdi Hantoush at the Ministry of Oil.

7. The new Government was thus a coalition between old guard Ba'athists who were conservative in outlook and who tended also to be anti-Egyptian, anti-Communist and prepared, in the main, to follow fairly moderate, middle of the road policies, + the "Palace Group", ~~were most of them~~ younger men with more progressive ideas, who would have liked to establish their rule on as broad (and so not exclusively Ba'athist) a basis as possible, to come to terms with the Kurds and to follow a policy generally of Iraq for the Iraqis.

8. In such a coalition it was thus only a matter of time before one of the groups moved against the other. The Ba'athists were the more experienced and better prepared, and less than a fortnight after the coup the inhabitants of Baghdad were made aware, by the presence in the streets of the tanks of the 10 Armoured Brigade, that a new upheaval was taking place. The Prime Minister meanwhile

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had been invited to the Presidential Palace, and was there arrested and flown out immediately to Morocco. The Minister of Defence, who was visiting Iraqi units in Jordan, was similarly arrested and deported to Rome. It is believed that the driving force behind the new coup was that very experienced intriguer Saleh Mehdi Amash, assisted by another ex-officer Ba'athist, Abdel Kerim Abdel Shattar al Sheikhli, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Government. The coup, however, owed much of its success to the defection of the Commander of the Republican Guard who deserted his friends in the "Palace Group" and went over to the Ba'ath.

9. Both coups demonstrated very clearly the present importance of the Guard and, to a lesser extent, of the Baghdad garrison, in the making and unmaking of Governments. The former had been greatly expanded, pampered and heavily armed by Abdel Salam Aref, and it was his successor's refusal to follow the advice of the "Palace Group" which precipitated the coup of 17 July. Again, in the coup of 30 July, it was the attitude of the Guard, or rather of its Commander, which appears to have been decisive, and it would seem that as long as the Government can be certain of the loyalty of the

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Guard and of the garrison of Baghdad it can be fairly confident of remaining in power, and if in addition it has the support of one other Divisional Commander it can consider itself all but invulnerable.

IV. The Ba'ath Administration.  
July 1968 - July 1969.

10. The Ba'ath, a pan-Arab party with a supra-national organisation, has nevertheless built up an elaborate structure on a cell system (see Annex B) typical of a clandestine minority group, which it has indeed been for much of its existence. As a result it has evolved as an isolated, doctrinaire elite with little popular standing, and when it has come to power it has displayed the weaknesses of its development in its lack of the common touch and of the essentials of administrative efficiency.

11. As far as policy is concerned the Party is committed nominally to following the dictates of the International Command, but in fact the Regional Commands have a good deal of autonomy, and both in Syria, and even more so in Iraq, have followed independent policies imposed by local conditions. Moreover by the time the Iraqi Ba'ath returned to power in July 1968 the International Command, owing to

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a series of "apostasies", had lost much of its influence, and the régime itself is representative of one wing only of Iraqi Ba'athism. It can thus in fact be regarded as no more than a minority group within a minority group.

12. The framing and direction of policy is in the hands of the Regional Command Council, a body of 16 Ba'athists, only six of whom hold office in the Government (see Annex A). The programme which it has sketched out for itself is much concerned with consolidation of its own internal position. The usual lip service is given to pan-Arabism and the need to cooperate with other Arab countries, the UAR in particular, but the main emphasis has been laid on the need to allot key posts in the Armed Forces, Police, Intelligence and Civil Service to loyal Party members. All services require to be purged of their non-Ba'ath elements and steps are to be taken to indoctrinate sympathetic and malleable material. Further emphasis is laid on the dominant rôle of the Command Council, not more than a third of whom may hold Government posts, security in particular being kept under its direct control.

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13. As regards relations with other Parties efforts were to be made to secure the co-operation of the Nasserists, Nationalists and certain Communist groups, with a view to forming a National Front and broadening the basis of its support. From any such Front, however, such religio-political movements as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Front were to be excluded, and every effort was to be made to undermine and destroy rival Ba'ath groups. Finally a "positive attitude" was to be adopted towards imperialist-inspired plots against the régime. One mistake which was not repeated was that of openly re-establishing the National Guard, the excesses of which had contributed so much to the unpopularity of the 1963 régime. Propaganda was to be used with discretion and Party members were to be given suitable posts where they might make their political influence felt, but emphasis was laid on the need to avoid alarming the people.

14. In foreign policy the programme followed predictable lines, support, as noted above, for pan-Arabism, restricted however, to progressive countries only, military action against Israel and support for guerilla organisations, strengthening of relations with socialist countries, particularly those supporting the Arabs, continuance of the

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struggle against western imperialism, Zionism and reaction, and the promotion and consolidation of Arab interests in the Persian Gulf.

15. At home the régime pledged itself to bring the oil companies under national control to settle the Kurdish problem, to expedite agrarian reform and to expand irrigation, in all of which both at home and abroad, the Iraqi Command followed fairly closely time-honoured party doctrines of social reform, secularism, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism and promotion of Arab unity with, however, a greater slant to the left than might have been expected. The régime prides itself on the moderation of its policies, though it is perhaps a contradiction in terms to speak of a moderate Ba'ath, a movement conspicuous always for the extremism of its ideology. Some groups are no doubt more moderate than others, but although the régime now in power describes itself as right-wing, its policies tend to follow patterns set by the USSR, Cuba and Yugoslavia.

16. It is to be remembered also that many in the régime are Ba'athists for opportunist reasons only. They are preponderantly Sunnis from central Iraq who have little political sensibility and not much idea of how to

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achieve such aims as they have and little interest in maintaining such links as still exist with the rump of the International Command, as represented by Aflag and Bitar. Although opposed in theory to military autocracy, they are many of them ex-officers who have had to rely on the Army both to bring them to power and to keep them there. To a great extent, therefore, they have to adapt their policies to the views of the senior officers among their supporters, and as suggested in paragraph 9 above, the attitude of the Republican Guard and of the Baghdad garrison is of vital significance.

The Regime in Action.

17. Despite a number of attempts to improve its popular image by creation of a National Front the regime so far has had singularly little success, largely because it is prepared to cooperate only on terms which other Parties find unacceptable. The Communists, though interested, want more socialism and less pan-Arabism; nor have they forgotten their persecution at the hands of the Ba'ath National Guard in 1963. They have been alienated also by blatant manipulation of Trade Union elections. Nor have the Ba'aths efforts to bring in some of the smaller and

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less important political groups, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Talabani Kurds or the Socialist Unity Party, been any more successful, largely because once again, though to a lesser extent than in 1963, the Ba'ath has shown itself unprepared to compromise.

18. It appears also to have achieved no great success in winning support in the Armed Forces, especially in those units on active service in Jordan and in the north, partly because of the severity of its anti-Ba'athist purges. It has further destroyed the integrity and efficiency of the Civil Service by placing Ba'athists in all posts of importance regardless of qualifications, and has settled, rather more discreetly than in the past, a number of old scores by indiscriminate arrest and confinement of Nasserists, Communists, left-wing Ba'athists and Islamic Front sympathisers, and in extreme cases does not appear to have stopped short of political murder.

19. The year in power has been devoted mainly to the consolidation of its position by methods which have become progressively more severe, and so correspondingly more unpopular. Increasingly it has had to resort to police methods directed in the main by the National Security Council in which the most influential



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voice is that of the doctrinaire and extreme Saddam al Takriti, Secretary-General of the Regional Command. It has shown also intolerance and inability to compromise in its treatment of minorities and foreign interests (the expulsion of the European staff of the Jesuit Hikma University is only one case in point), and it has done nothing to satisfy Shi'i apprehensions or to make more than half-hearted efforts to deal with the Kurdish problem. In domestic affairs it has achieved little and, as remarked above, the efficiency and honesty of the civil service has been depreciated further by the appointment of party members to posts for which they have no qualifications.

20. In foreign affairs the Party has veered to the left with its financial and aid agreements with the Soviet bloc,<sup>(2)</sup> its harassment of the oil companies, its recognition of East Germany and its persecution of former political leaders on charges of collaboration with imperialism, and its hunt for, and execution, of alleged Zionist agents. It

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(2) Recent examples are the sulphur deal with Poland, the agreement between INOC and Machineexport (USSR) for supply of oil equipment and technical help; the loan of \$70 million from the USSR for development of the North Rumaila oilfield, and the \$84 million credit from East Germany for industrial projects.

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favours an all-out military assault on Israel under a Unified Arab Command, but is on bad, or at the best hardly cordial terms with the other states involved, the UAR, Jordan and Syria. The Party would like, however, to play a greater part in Arab affairs than it does now, and there are signs that it may be attempting, however ineffectually, to build up its influence through party members in its embassies in Aden, Kuwait, the Sudan, Syria and some other Arab countries. It is also showing increasing interest in developments in the Persian Gulf States.

21. Not only is the Ba'ath an unpopular minority régime, it is also a most divided one. Internal rivalry appears to centre round the two Deputy Prime Ministers, General Saleh Mehdi Amash, who is also Minister of the Interior, and General Hardan Abdel Ghaffar al Takriti, the Minister of Defence. They are both of them old hands at political intrigue, but whereas Amash favours rapprochement with the Syrian Ba'ath and extreme measures, both against "reaction" abroad and opposition at home, and is supported by the left-wing and extremer members of the Party such as Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Shaikhli, Minister of

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Foreign Affairs, Saddam al Takriti and Abdullah Sallum al Samarraai, Minister of Culture and National Guidance, Takriti, with the bulk of the Ba'athist officers in the Armed Forces behind him, and the support of the President, is inclined to follow less radical and more traditional Ba'ath policies. So far the two men have been evenly matched, but Takriti, despite support in the Army, is mistrusted on account of the part he is alleged to have played in the fall of the regime in 1963, and it is noteworthy that he is not a member of the Regional Command Council. Were either ever to feel that they had the advantage they would no doubt move against the other in a repetition of the mini-coup of 30 July.

V. Conclusions.

22. It must inevitably be concluded that this is a Government of few strengths and a great many weaknesses. No regime which is concerned primarily with the problem of its own survival is likely to govern well, and it suffers like so many others of its kind through having come to power by unconstitutional means and the police methods which it has to employ to remain there. Being conscious of its unpopularity and its minority status it

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tends to be uncertain, irresolute, and given to extreme propaganda and sporadic outbursts of violence against real or imagined opponents.

23. It has failed conspicuously to improve its image or consolidate its position by securing the support of other political groups, and it is intolerant of the slightest dissent in a country which, apart from other party differences, contains sizable minorities in the Kurds, the Shi'is and the Christians. Until it shows itself prepared to sacrifice some of its extreme ideology, and ready to compromise to a far greater extent than it has shown itself ready to do, it is likely to remain as isolated and as remote from popular support as any of its predecessors.

24. As remarked above it is a highly elitist organisation which has almost no grass roots. Its system of recruitment and its structure set a premium on isolation and secrecy, characteristics which, however admirable and desirable they may be in opposition and under suppression, are no longer so in office. In some ways it suffers from much the same weaknesses as the old Wafd party in Egypt, a first class electioneering machine, but in power inefficient, corrupt and given to divisiveness.



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25. In Iraq it has developed certain typical national characteristics. The fanatic streak always evident in its doctrine has developed into partizan violence in the tough climate of Iraqi politics, and it has become, even more so than in Syria, the facade for an authoritarian and opportunist military group for whom Ba'athism is largely a convenient political label, <sup>or</sup> whose nationalism is in complete contradiction to its pan-Arabism. Even less than in Syria does it rest on popular support, and it appears to have appealed most strongly to the bourgeois strata of Iraqi society, the middle class Army officers and professional men, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and university students. It is thus the party of a very small segment of Iraqi society. Prior to 1963 it was of no great importance and was regarded with something like contempt for its behaviour in power served only to deepen a popular dislike and distrust, which the present régime has done little to dissipate. The gap between the people and the Party, between its own ideology and the realities of the exercise of power, grows progressively wider. So long, however, as it can command

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military support of the sort suggested in paragraph 9 above it is likely to remain in power for what could be quite some time.

Middle East Section,  
FCO Research Department.  
31 July, 1969.

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Annex A

The Regional Command Council in Iraq

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Ahmed Hassan al Bakr,                 | President and Prime Minister.                 |
| Saleh Mehdi Ammash,                   | D/Prime Minister and<br>Minister of Interior. |
| Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, | Minister of Foreign Affairs.                  |
| Saddam al Takriti,                    | Secretary-General.                            |
| Abdullah Sallum al Samarraï,          | Minister of Culture<br>and Information.       |
| Izzat Mustapha,                       | Minister of Health.                           |
| Shafiq al Kamali,                     | Minister for Youth Affairs.                   |
| Salah al Takriti                      |   |
| Abdel Khaliq al Samarraï              |   |
| Murtada al Hadithi                    |   |
| Muhammed Mahjoub                      |   |
| Sami <sup>o</sup> Nagm                |   |
| Naim Haddad                           |   |
| Kerim Shaitaf                         |   |
| Fallah al Takriti                     |   |
| Hamid Saigh.                          |   |

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## Annex B

## The Structure of the Ba'ath Party

1. International Command (Al Qayadat al Qawmiya).
2. Regional Command (Syria)      Regional Command (Iraq)  
(Al Qayadat al Qutriya)      Other Regional Commands
3. Branches (Furu').
4. Departments (Shu'ab)
5. Divisions (Firaq)
6. Areas (Manatiq)
7. Sections (Qita')
8. Cells. (hwal)

1. Elected by International Congress of the Party.
2. Elected by Regional Congresses.
3. Secretaries of Departments and Party nominees.
4. Selected members of Divisions.
5. 3 - 6 Area members.
6. Selected Section leaders.
7. Cell leaders.
8. 3 - 5 members.



RESEARCH DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath  
(July 1968 - July 1969)

**I. Introduction**

The Ba'ath Party in Iraq first came to power as the result of the coup of February 1963 in which Abdel Kerim Qasim was overthrown and assassinated, and it held office for some nine months before being ousted by the man whom it had chosen as its figurehead, President Abdel Salam Aref. The Ba'ath boasted that its eclipse would be of short duration, and that it would soon return to power, but in the event it had to wait nearly five years, until July 1968.

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try and place the present régime in its proper perspective against the background of Iraqi politics, to discover in what ways it resembles or differs from its predecessor, to examine its ideology, methods and party organisation and finally, to decide whether in fact the Party has a political viability of its own, or whether it merely affords political cover for a group of opportunist and not very united army officers.



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**II. The Background to the Coup of July 1968.**

3. Its nine months in power in 1963 showed clearly how little genuine support it was able to command in the country as a whole, and how far it was from being able to maintain even a semblance of unity. For this there were a number of reasons - the peculiarities of the party organisation which placed a premium on secretiveness and elitism, its pan-Arabism as opposed to Iraqi nationalism, the strong contrast between its democratic and even liberal ideologies and its authoritarian and repressive methods of rule, its nepotism, corruption and lack of administrative ability, and its use of violence and of the National Guard for purpose of paying off old scores and of maintaining itself in power.

4. By the time it fell it had probably achieved the distinction of having been the most unpopular régime ever to have governed Iraq, and President Aref who, whatever else his weaknesses and failures, had a remarkable understanding of the foibles and characteristics of the men with whom he had to deal, coupled with a real flair for political intrigue, had little difficulty in getting rid of a régime which was not only detested, but had also been hopelessly weakened by its own dissensions.

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5. The Ba'ath which was ousted in the "apostasy" of November, 1963<sup>(1)</sup> was no longer a united party, and the split which first appeared during its months in power was deepened even further during the period of "negative militancy" covering the years between 1964 and 1968. By the beginning of 1967 it was possible to distinguish three separate Ba'ath groups in Iraq - the right-wing Ba'ath, consisting mainly of old guard Ba'athists still in relationship with the International Command, thus enabling them to entitle themselves the Regional Ba'ath (Al Nish al Ba'ath fi Qutr al Iraq), a left-wing group, Marxist and pro-Syrian in ideology (Al Ba'ath al Nasiri), and a much smaller, extremist group, of which the leading personality was Ali Salih al Sandi, whose gangsterist methods as Deputy Prime Minister and boss of the National Guard in 1963 had contributed greatly to the fall of the régime. It was the first of these, the

(1) Two such "apostasies" have taken place in the course of current right-wing Ba'ath political jargon - that of 18 November, 1963, resulting in the fall and disintegration of the Party in Iraq, and that of 23 February, 1966, in which Hafez al Amin's régime in Syria was overthrown in the coup led by Salah al Jodid.

REFERENCE TO AS "THE SETBACK OF NOVEMBER 1963"

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were thus allotted to the planners of the 17 July ~~gun~~, the remainder being given in the main to professionals who were experts in their respective spheres, Salih Kubba at the Ministry of Finance, Nasr al Hani at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mahdi Hantoush at the Ministry of Oil.

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had been invited to the Presidential Palace, and was there arrested and flown out immediately to Morocco. The Minister of Defence, who was visiting Iraqi units in Jordan, was similarly arrested and deported to Rome. It is believed that the driving force behind the new ~~gown~~ was that very experienced intriguer Saleh Mohdi Amash, assisted by another ex-officer Ba'athist, Abdel Karim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Government. The ~~gown~~, however, owed much of its success to the defection of the Commander of the Republican Guard who deserted his friends in the "Palace Group" and went over to the Ba'ath.

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**July 1958 - July 1959.**

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a series of "apostasies", had lost much of its influence, and the régime itself is representative of one wing only of Iraqi Ba'athism. It can thus in fact be regarded as no more than a minority group within a minority group.

2. The framing and direction of policy is in the hands of the Regional Command Council, a body of 16 Ba'athists, only six of whom hold office in the Government (see Annex A). The programme which it has sketched out for itself is much concerned with consolidation of its own internal position. The usual lip service is given to pan-Arabism and the need to cooperate with other Arab countries, the UAR in particular, but the main emphasis has been laid on the need to allot key posts in the Armed Forces, Police, Intelligence and Civil Service to loyal Party members. All services require to be purged of their non-Ba'ath elements and steps are to be taken to indoctrinate sympathetic and malleable material. Further emphasis is laid on the dominant rôle of the Command Council, not more than a third of whom may hold Government posts, security in particular being kept under its direct control.

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13. As regards relations with other Parties efforts were to be made to secure the co-operation of the Nasserists, Nationalists and certain Communist groups, with a view to forming a National Front and broadening the basis of its support. From any such Front, however, such religio-political movements as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Front were to be excluded, and every effort was to be made to undermine and destroy rival Ba'ath groups. Finally a "positive attitude" was to be adopted towards imperialist-inspired plots against the régime. One mistake which was not repeated was that of openly re-establishing the National Guard, the excesses of which had contributed so much to the unpopularity of the 1963 régime. Propaganda was to be used with discretion and Party members were to be given suitable posts where they might make their political influence felt, but emphasis was laid on the need to avoid alarming the people.

14. In foreign policy the programme followed predictable lines, support, as noted above, for pan-Arabism, restricted however, to progressive countries only, military action against Israel and support for guerilla organisations, strengthening of relations with socialist countries, particularly those supporting the Arabs, continuance of the



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struggle against western imperialism, Zionism and reaction, and the promotion and consolidation of Arab interests in the Persian Gulf.

15. At home the régime pledged itself to bring the oil companies under national control, to settle the Kurdish problem, to expedite agrarian reform and to expand irrigation, in all of which both at home and abroad, the Iraqi Command followed fairly closely time-honoured party doctrines of social reform, secularism, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism and promotion of Arab unity with, however, a greater slant to the left than might have been expected. The régime prides itself on the moderation of its policies, though it is perhaps a contradiction in terms to speak of a moderate Ba'ath<sup>ist</sup>, a movement conspicuous always for the extremism of its ideology. Some groups are no doubt more moderate than others, but although the régime now in power describes itself as right-wing, its policies tend to follow patterns set by the USSR, Cuba and Yugoslavia. (YUGOSLAVIA is small known in THIS context?)

16. It is to be remembered also that many in the régime are Ba'athists for opportunist reasons only. They are preponderantly Sunnis from central Iraq who have little political sensibility and not much idea of how to

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achieve such aims as they have and little interest in maintaining such links as still exist with the rump of the International Command, as represented by Aflag and Bitar. <sup>AFLAG</sup> Although opposed in theory to military autocracy, they are many of them ex-officers who have had to rely on the Army both to bring them to power and to keep them there. To a great extent, therefore, they have to adapt their policies to the views of the senior officers among their supporters, and as suggested in paragraph 9 above, the attitude of the Republican Guard and of the Baghdad garrison is of vital significance.

**The Régime in Action.**

17. Despite a number of attempts to improve its popular image by creation of a National Front the régime so far has had singularly little success, largely because it is prepared to cooperate only on terms which other Parties find unacceptable. The Communists, though interested, want more socialism and less pan-Arabism; nor have they forgotten their persecution at the hands of the Ba'ath National Guard in 1963. They have been alienated also by blatant manipulation of Trade Union elections. Nor have the Ba'aths efforts to bring in some of the smaller and

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less important political groups, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Talabani Kurds or the Socialist Unity Party, been any more successful, largely because once again, though to a lesser extent than in 1963, the Ba'ath has shown itself unprepared to compromise.

18. It appears also to have achieved no great success in winning support in the Armed Forces, especially in those units on active service in Jordan and in the north, partly because of the severity of its anti-Ba'athist purges. It has further destroyed the integrity and efficiency of the Civil Service by placing Ba'athists in all posts of importance regardless of qualifications, and has settled, rather more discreetly than in the past, a number of old scores by indiscriminate arrest and confinement of Nassarists, Communists, left-wing Ba'athists and Islamic Front sympathisers, and in extreme cases does not appear to have stopped short of political murder.

19. The year in power has been devoted mainly to the consolidation of its position by methods which have become progressively more severe, and so correspondingly more unpopular. Increasingly it has had to resort to police methods directed in the main by the National Security Council in which the most influential

✓ THE TALABANI KURDS  
ARE "CREATURES" OF  
THE REGIME - MENEMANIS  
LIES WILL AS WHAT THEY  
ARE TOLD AS LONG AS  
THEY ARE PAID. - and  
NOT A POLITICAL GROUP.

✓ AND BECAUSE OF ITS BLATANT  
PROMOTION OF JUNIOR BATHIST  
OFFICIALS OVER THE HEROES  
OF <sup>THEIR</sup> NON-PARTY COMRADES.

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voice is that of the doctrinaire and extreme Saddam al Takriti, Secretary-General of the Regional Command. It has shown also intolerance and inability to compromise in its treatment of minorities and foreign <sup>(MIDDLE WESTERN)</sup> interests (the expulsion of the European staff of the Jesuit Hikma University is only one case in point), and it has done nothing to satisfy Shi'i apprehensions or to make more than half-hearted efforts to deal with the Kurdish problem. In domestic affairs it has achieved little and, as remarked above, the efficiency and honesty of the civil service has been depreciated further by the appointment of party members to posts for which they have no qualifications.

20. In foreign affairs the Party has veered to the left with its financial and aid agreements with the Soviet bloc, <sup>(2)</sup> its harassment of the oil companies, its recognition of East Germany and (its persecution of former political leaders on charges of collaboration with imperialism, and its hunt for, and execution, of alleged Marxist agents.) It

(2) Recent examples are the sulphur deal with Poland, the agreement between INOC and Mashinexport (USSR) for supply of oil equipment and technical help; the loan of \$70 million from the USSR for development of the North Rumaila oilfield, and the \$24 million credit from East Germany for industrial projects.

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ITS ACTIONS HAVE FULLY LIVED UP TO SHI'IA APPREHENSIONS AND ITS HALF HEARTED ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH THE KURDISH PROBLEM WERE ~~LONG AND A FRESH FLAME~~ ~~UP~~ HAVE BEEN TOTALLY INEFFECTUAL.

This is hardly evidence of a veer to the left. These leniencies are merely a means of strengthening the regime's internal position.



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favours an all-out military assault on Israel under a Unified Arab Command, but is on bad, or at the best hardly cordial terms with the other states involved, the UAR, Jordan and Syria. The Party would like, however, to play a greater part in Arab affairs than it does now, and there are signs that it may be attempting, however ineffectually, to build up its influence through party members in its embassies in Aden, Kuwait, the Sudan, Syria and some other Arab countries. It is also showing increasing interest in developments in the Persian Gulf States, ~~where it~~ <sup>it</sup> sees itself as bulwark of Arabism

21. Not only is the Ba'ath an unpopular minority régime, it is also a most divided one. Internal rivalry appears to centre round the two Deputy Prime Ministers, General Salah Mehdi Amash, who is also Minister of the Interior, and General Haidan Abdel Chaffar al Zakriti, the Minister of Defence. They are both of them old hands at political intrigues, but whereas Amash favours, <sup>in principle,</sup> ~~cooperation~~ with the Syrian Ba'ath and extreme measures, both against "reaction" abroad and opposition at home, and is supported by the left-wing, and extremist members of the Party such as Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Shushli, Minister of

✓  
AGAINST THE AMBITIONS <sup>OF IRAN</sup> WHO IT FEARS MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO FILL "THE VACUUM" <sup>CREATED BY BRITISH WITHDRAWAL IN 1971.</sup> ON THE FACE OF IT THE BATH'S ATTITUDE TO THE U.A.R. IS ONE OF SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT BUT IT IS <sup>PROBABLE</sup> THAT SUCH A 'PROGRESSIVE' REGIME WILL NOT LONG TOLERATE THE EXISTENCE OF THE 'FEUDAL AND BACKWARD' SHEIKHDOMS AND <sup>WILL WORK COVERTLY VIA BATHIST COUNCILS TO ENCOURAGE SEVERING MODERATE ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE FEDERATION,</sup> DOCTRINAIRE

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Foreign Affairs, Saddam al Tikriti and Abdullah Salim al Samarra, Minister of Culture and National Guidance, Tikriti, with the bulk of the Ba'athist officers in the Armed Forces behind him, and the support of the President, is inclined to follow less radical and more traditional Ba'ath policies. So far the two men have been evenly matched, but Tikriti, despite support in the Army, is mistrusted on account of the part he is alleged to have played in the fall of the régime in 1963, and it is noteworthy that he is not a member of the Regional Command Council. Were either ever to feel that they had the advantage they would no doubt move against the other in a repetition of the mini-coup of 30 July. ✓

#### V. Conclusions.

22. It must inevitably be concluded that this is a Government of few strengths and a great many weaknesses. ✓ No régime which is concerned primarily with the problem of its own survival is likely to govern well, and it suffers like so many others of its kind through having come to power by unconstitutional means and the police methods which it has to employ to remain there. Being conscious of its unpopularity and its minority status it

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I would doubt that

Tikriti is really a Ba'athist at all. He is a cynical opportunist who will only wear a Ba'athist cloak as long as it suits him and is quite rightly distrusted by the doctrinaire members of the Party. I think that he only remains in power because he is a highly skilled tactician and (2) is supported by important elements in the force - the old Ba'athists & the many non-Ba'athists as well - e.g. the middle & senior ranking professional soldiers. Al Bahr is a light weight "father figure" useful for papering over the cracks in the Party - if Amash succeed in removing Tikriti, I suspect that Al Bahr would go to.

Has any Iraqi régime come to power by "constitutional means" since 1958? ✓



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tends to be uncertain, irresolute, and given to extreme propaganda and sporadic outbursts of violence against real or imagined opponents.

23. It has failed consciously to improve its image or consolidate its position by securing the support of other political groups, and it is intolerant of the slightest dissent in a country which, apart from other party differences, contains sizable minorities in the Kurds, the Shi'is and the Christians. Until it shows itself prepared to sacrifice some of its extreme ideology, and ready to compromise to a far greater extent than it has shown itself ready to do, it is likely to remain as isolated and as remote from popular support as any of its predecessors.

24. As remarked above it is a highly elitist organisation which has almost no grass roots. Its system of recruitment and its structure set a premium on isolation and secrecy, characteristics which, however admirable and desirable they may be in opposition and under suppression, are no longer so in office. In some ways it suffers from much the same weaknesses as the old Wafd party in Egypt, a first class electioneering machine, but in power inefficient, corrupt and given to divisiveness.

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25. In Iraq it has developed certain typical national characteristics. The fanatic streak always evident in its doctrine has developed into partisan violence in the tough climate of Iraqi politics, and it has become, even more so than in Syria, the facade for an authoritarian and opportunist military group for whom Ba'athism is largely a convenient political label<sup>or</sup>, whose nationalism is in complete contradiction to its pan-Arabism. Even less than in Syria does it rest on popular support, and it appears to have appealed most strongly to the bourgeois strata of Iraqi society, the middle class Army officers and professional men, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and university students. It is thus the party of a very small segment of Iraqi society. Prior to 1963 it was of no great importance and was regarded with something like contempt for its behaviour in power served only to deepen a popular dislike and distrust, which the present régime has done little to dissipate. The gap between the people and the Party, between its own ideology and the realities of the exercise of power, grows progressively wider. So long, however, as it can command

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military support of the sort suggested in paragraph 9 above it is likely to remain in power for what could be quite some time.

Middle East Section,  
FCO Research Department.  
31 July, 1969.

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**Annex A**

**The National Command Council in Iraq**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Ahmed Hassan al Bakr,</b>                | <b>President and Prime Minister.</b>                  |
| <b>Salih Mehdi Amash,</b>                   | <b>D/Prime Minister and<br/>Minister of Interior.</b> |
| <b>Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhi,</b> | <b>Minister of Foreign Affairs.</b>                   |
| <b>Saddam al Tikriti,</b>                   | <b>Secretary-General.</b>                             |
| <b>Abdullah Salim al Samarra,</b>           | <b>Minister of Culture<br/>and Information.</b>       |
| <b>Izzat Mustafa,</b>                       | <b>Minister of Health.</b>                            |
| <b>Shafiq al Kamali,</b>                    | <b>Minister for Youth Affairs.</b>                    |
| <b>Salih al Tikriti</b>                     |   |
| <b>Abdel Khaliq al Samarra</b>              |   |
| <b>Murtada al Hadi</b>                      |   |
| <b>Muhammad Mahjub</b>                      |   |
| <b>Sami' Naji</b>                           |   |
| <b>Haim Haddad</b>                          |   |
| <b>Kerim Shaitaf</b>                        |   |
| <b>Falakh al Tikriti</b>                    |   |
| <b>Hamid Saigh.</b>                         |   |

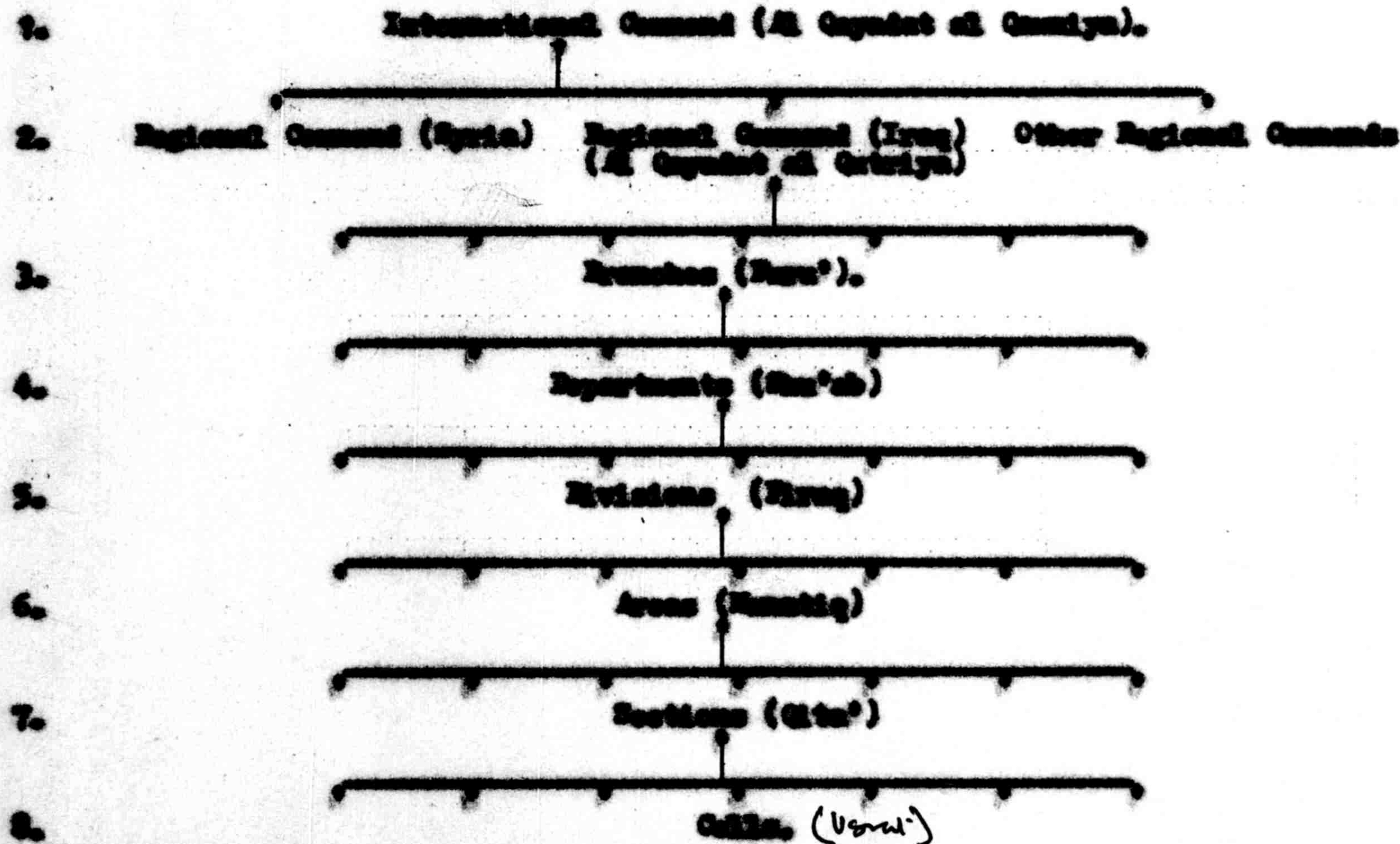
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## Annex II

### The Structure of the Ba'ath Party



1. Elected by International Congress of the Party.
2. Elected by Regional Congresses.
3. Secretaries of Departments and Party members.
4. Selected members of Divisions.
5. 3 - 6 Area members.
6. Selected Section leaders.
7. Cell leaders.
8. 3 - 5 members.



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Reference

RR 6/18 (2)

RR 6/18

NEO (Mr. Winchcliffe).

I attach herewith a  
first draft on "The Regional  
Command of the Iraqi State",  
on which we should be  
very grateful for your  
comments.

A. and

Middle East Section.  
Despatch Sub.

31 Jul 48

4/8

Mr Paul

I agree with the main substance  
to all the conclusions of this very useful  
Paper. I have made a few comments &

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some suggested alterations in the  
margin of the text

PMH Hamill

1/8/69.

Copy

21. 2. 18

1/8

Mr. Paul

I have with the main  
reference to the very useful  
I have made a few  
alterations

Completed



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Reference.....

RR 6/18 with (3)

Mr Ford.

1 attach herewith copies of  
the second draft of the  
memorandum on "The Regional  
Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath",  
which has been cleared with  
N.E.D.

2. Subject to comment by you I  
suggest that it should now be  
sent to Baghdad for comment  
and submit a covering draft  
herewith.

A. van

Middle East Section.

5 August 1969

Agreed

J.F. 18/8.

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(3)

Registry  
No. RR 6/18

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RESEARCH DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath

(July 1968 - July 1969)

I. Introduction

The Ba'ath Party in Iraq first came to power as the result of the coup of February 1963 in which Abdel Kerim Qasim was overthrown and assassinated, and it held office for some nine months before being ousted by the man whom it had chosen as its figurehead, President Abdel Salam Aref. The Ba'ath boasted that its eclipse would be of short duration, and that it would soon return to power, but in the event it had to wait nearly five years, until July 1968.

2. It is the object of this memorandum to try and place the present régime in its proper perspective against the background of Iraqi politics, to discover in what ways it resembles or differs from its predecessor, to examine its ideology, methods and party organisation and finally, to decide whether in fact the Party has a political viability of its own, or whether it merely affords political cover for a group of opportunist and not very united army officers.

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II. The Background to the Coup of July 1968.

3. Its nine months in power in 1963 showed clearly how little genuine support it was able to command in the country as a whole, and how far it was from being able to maintain even a semblance of unity. For this there were a number of reasons - the peculiarities of the party organisation which placed a premium on secretiveness and elitism, its pan-Arabism as opposed to Iraqi nationalism, the strong contrast between its democratic and even liberal ideologies and its authoritarian and repressive methods of rule, its nepotism, corruption and lack of administrative ability, and its use of violence and of the National Guard for purpose of paying off old scores and of maintaining itself in power.

4. By the time it fell it had probably achieved the distinction of having been the most unpopular régime ever to have governed Iraq, and President Aref who, whatever else his weaknesses and failures, had a remarkable understanding of the foibles and characteristics of the men with whom he had to deal, coupled with a real flair for political intrigue, had little difficulty in getting rid of a régime which was not only detested, but had also been hopelessly weakened by its own dissensions.

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5. The Ba'ath which was ousted in the "apostasy" of November, 1963<sup>(1)</sup> was no longer a united party, and the split which first appeared during its months in power was deepened even further during the period of "negative militancy" covering the years between 1964 and 1968. By the beginning of 1967 it was possible to distinguish three separate Ba'ath groups in Iraq - the right-wing Ba'ath, consisting mainly of old guard Ba'athists still in relationship with the International Command, thus enabling them to entitle themselves the Regional Ba'ath (Al Hizb al Ba'ath fi Qutr al Iraq), a left-wing group, Marxist and pro-Syrian in ideology (Al Ba'ath al Yasiri), and a much smaller, extremist group, of which the leading personality was Ali Saleh al Saadi, whose gangsterist methods as Deputy Prime Minister and boss of the National Guard in 1963 had contributed greatly to the fall of the régime. It was the first of these, the

---

(1) Two such "apostasies" have taken their place in the canon of current right-wing Ba'ath political jargon - that of 18 November, 1963 resulting in the fall and disintegration of the Party in Iraq, and that of 23 February, 1966, in which Hafiz al Amin's régime in Syria was overthrown in the coup led by Saleh al Jedid.

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right-wing Ba'ath, which participated in the coup of 17 July, 1968, and then itself carried out the further coup of 30 July; and while it has some claim to be regarded as representative of orthodox Ba'athism, it is noticeable that, as happened with previous Ba'ath regimes, both in Iraq and Syria, the expediencies of the exercise of power have frequently made nonsense of party doctrine.

III. The Coups of July, 1968.

6. On 17 July, 1968 a number of officers known as the "Palace Group", allegedly also members of the Arab Revolutionary Movement, in conjunction with a number of right-wing Ba'athists carried out a bloodless coup which resulted in the deposition and exile of President Abdel Rahman Aref. The part played by the officers was underlined by the appointment of one of their number, Colonel Abdel Razzag Nayef (Deputy Director of Military Intelligence) as Prime Minister, and of another, Lt.-Colonel Ibrahim Abdel Rahman Daud (O.C. Republican Guard Brigade) as Minister of Defence. The Presidency went to a veteran Ba'athist, General Ahmed Hassan al Bakr, who had been Prime Minister in 1963, and the Ministry of the Interior to another, General Saleh Mehdi Amash. The key posts in the

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Government were thus allotted to the planners of the 17 July coup, the remainder being given in the main to professionals who were experts in their respective spheres, Salih Kubba at the Ministry of Finance, Nasr al Hani at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mahdi Hantoush at the Ministry of Oil.

7. The new Government was thus a coalition between old guard Ba'athists who were conservative in outlook and who tended also to be anti-Egyptian, anti-Communist and prepared, in the main, to follow fairly moderate, middle of the road policies, and the "Palace Group", most of them younger men with more progressive ideas, who would have liked to establish their rule on as broad (and so not exclusively Ba'athist) a basis as possible, to come to terms with the Kurds and to follow a policy generally of Iraq for the Iraqis.

8. In such a coalition it was thus only a matter of time before one of the groups moved against the other. The Ba'athists were the more experienced and better prepared, and less than a fortnight after the coup the inhabitants of Baghdad were made aware, by the presence in the streets of the tanks of the 10 Armoured Brigade, that a new upheaval was taking place. The Prime Minister meanwhile

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had been invited to the Presidential Palace, and was there arrested and flown out immediately to Morocco. The Minister of Defence, who was visiting Iraqi units in Jordan, was similarly arrested and deported to Rome. It is believed that the driving force behind the new coup was that very experienced intriguer Saleh Mehdi Amash, assisted by another ex-officer Ba'athist, Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Government. The coup, however, owed much of its success to the defection of the Commander of the Republican Guard who deserted his friends in the "Palace Group" and went over to the Ba'ath.

9. Both coups demonstrated very clearly the present importance of the Guard and, to a lesser extent, of the Baghdad garrison, in the making and unmaking of Governments. The former had been greatly expanded, pampered and heavily armed by Abdel Salam Aref, and it was his successor's refusal to follow the advice of the "Palace Group" which precipitated the coup of 17 July. Again, in the coup of 30 July, it was the attitude of the Guard, or rather of its Commander, which appears to have been decisive, and it would seem that as long as the Government can be certain of the

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loyalty of the Guard and of the garrison of Baghdad it can be fairly confident of remaining in power, and if in addition it has the support of one other Divisional Commander it can consider itself all but invulnerable.

IV. The Ba'ath Administration.  
July 1968 - July 1969.

10. The Ba'ath, a pan-Arab party with a supra-national organisation, has nevertheless built up an elaborate structure on a cell system (see Annex B) typical of a clandestine minority group, which it has indeed been for much of its existence. As a result it has evolved as an isolated, doctrinaire elite with little popular standing, and when it has come to power it has displayed the weaknesses of its development in its lack of the common touch and of the essentials of administrative efficiency.

11. As far as policy is concerned the Party is committed nominally to following the dictates of the International Command, but in fact the Regional Commands have a good deal of autonomy, and both in Syria, and even more so in Iraq, have followed independent policies imposed by local conditions, and dictated by personal ambitions. Moreover by the time the Iraqi Ba'ath returned to power in July 1968 the International Command, owing to

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a series of "apostasies", had lost much of its influence, and the régime itself is representative of one wing only of Iraqi Ba'athism. It can thus in fact be regarded as no more than a minority group within a minority group.

12. The framing and direction of policy is in the hands of the Regional Command Council, a body of 16 Ba'athists, only six of whom hold office in the Government (see Annex A). The programme which it has sketched out for itself is much concerned with consolidation of its own internal position. The usual lip service is given to pan-Arabism and the need to cooperate with other Arab countries, the UAR in particular, but the main emphasis has been laid on the need to allot key posts in the Armed Forces, Police, Intelligence and Civil Service to loyal Party members. All services require to be purged of their non-Ba'ath elements and steps are to be taken to indoctrinate sympathetic and malleable material. Further emphasis is laid on the dominant rôle of the Command Council, not more than a third of whom may hold Government posts, security in particular being kept under its direct control.

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13. As regards relations with other Parties efforts were to be made to secure the co-operation of the Nasserists, Nationalists and certain Communist groups, with a view to forming a National Front and broadening the basis of its support. From any such Front, however, such religio-political movements as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Front were to be excluded, and every effort was to be made to undermine and destroy rival Ba'ath groups. Finally, a "positive attitude" was to be adopted towards imperialist-inspired plots against the régime. One mistake which was not repeated was that of openly re-establishing the National Guard, the excesses of which had contributed so much to the unpopularity of the 1963 régime. Propaganda was to be used with discretion and Party members were to be given suitable posts where they might make their political influence felt, but emphasis was laid on the need to avoid alarming the people.

14. In foreign policy the programme followed predictable lines, support, as noted above, for pan-Arabism, restricted however, to progressive countries only, military action against Israel and support for guerilla organisations, strengthening of relations with socialist countries, particularly those supporting the Arabs, continuance of the

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struggle against western imperialism, Zionism and reaction, and the promotion and consolidation of Arab interests in the Persian Gulf.

15. At home the régime pledged itself to bring the oil companies under national control to settle the Kurdish problem, to expedite agrarian reform and to expand irrigation, in all of which both at home and abroad, the Iraqi Command followed fairly closely time-honoured party doctrines of social reform, secularism, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism and promotion of Arab unity with, however, a greater slant to the left than might have been expected. The régime prides itself on the moderation of its policies, though it is perhaps a contradiction in terms to speak of a moderate Ba'ath, a movement conspicuous always for the extremism of its ideology. Some groups are no doubt more moderate than others, but although the régime now in power describes itself as right-wing, its policies tend to follow patterns set by the USSR and Cuba.

16. It is to be remembered also that many in the régime are Ba'athists for opportunist reasons only. They are preponderantly Sunnis from central Iraq who have little political sensibility and not much idea of how to

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achieve such aims as they have and little interest in maintaining such links as still exist with the rump of the International Command, as represented by Aflaq and Bitar. Although opposed in theory to military autocracy, they are many of them ex-officers who have had to rely on the Army both to bring them to power and to keep them there. To a great extent, therefore, they have to adapt their policies to the views of the senior officers among their supporters, and as suggested in paragraph 9 above, the attitude of the Republican Guard and of the Baghdad garrison is of vital significance.

The Régime in Action.

17. Despite a number of attempts to improve its popular image by creation of a National Front the régime so far has had singularly little success, largely because it is prepared to cooperate only on terms which other Parties find unacceptable. The Communists, though interested, want more socialism and less pan-Arabism; nor have they forgotten their persecution at the hands of the Ba'ath National Guard in 1963. They have been alienated also by blatant manipulation of Trade Union elections. Nor have the Ba'ath's efforts to bring in some of the smaller and

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less important political groups, the Arab Socialist Movement or the Socialist Unity Party, been any more successful, largely because once again, though to a lesser extent than in 1963, the Ba'ath has shown itself unprepared to compromise.

18. It appears also to have achieved no great success in winning support in the Armed Forces, especially in those units on active service in Jordan and in the north, partly because of the severity of its anti-Ba'athist purges, and promotion of junior pro-Ba'athists over the heads of senior and more competent officers. It has further destroyed the integrity and efficiency of the Civil Service by placing Ba'athists in all posts of importance regardless of qualifications, and has settled, rather more discreetly than in the past, a number of old scores by indiscriminate arrest and confinement of Nasserists, Communists, left-wing Ba'athists and Islamic Front sympathisers, and in extreme cases does not appear to have stopped short of political murder.

19. The year in power has been devoted mainly to the consolidation of its position by methods which have become progressively more severe, and so correspondingly more unpopular.

Increasingly it has had to resort to police methods directed in the main by the National



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Security Council in which the most influential voice is that of the doctrinaire and extreme Saddam al Takriti, Secretary-General of the Regional Command. It has shown also intolerance and inability to compromise in its treatment of minorities and foreign, mainly western, interests (the expulsion of the European staff of the Jesuit Hikma University is only one case in point); ~~and~~ it has fully lived up to Shi'i apprehensions, and its rather half-hearted efforts to deal with the Kurdish problem have been wholly ineffectual. In domestic affairs it has achieved little and, as remarked above, the efficiency and honesty of the civil service has been depreciated further by the appointment of party members to posts for which they have no qualifications.

20. In foreign affairs the Party has veered to the left with its financial and aid agreements with the Soviet bloc, <sup>(2)</sup> its harassment of the oil companies, its recognition of East Germany and its persecution of former political leaders on charges of collaboration

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(2) Recent examples are the sulphur deal with Poland, the agreement between INOC and Machineexport (USSR) for supply of oil equipment and technical help; the loan of \$70 million from the USSR for development of the North Rumaila oilfield, and the \$84 million credit from East Germany for industrial projects.

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with imperialism. It favours an all-out military assault on Israel under a Unified Arab Command, but is on bad, or at the best hardly cordial terms with the other states involved, the UAR, Jordan and Syria. The Party would like, however, to play a greater part in Arab affairs than it does now, and there are signs that it may be attempting, however ineffectually, to build up its influence through party members in its embassies in Aden, Kuwait, the Sudan, Syria and some other Arab countries. It is also showing increasing interest in developments in the Persian Gulf States, where it sees itself as the champion of Arabism against the ambitions and encroachments of Iran. While on the whole the régime supports the creation of the Union of Arab Emirates, it would be unlikely to tolerate for long the existence of the "feudal reactionary" sheikhdoms which would compose it.

21. Not only is the Ba'ath an unpopular minority régime, it is also a most divided one. Internal rivalry appears to centre round the two Deputy Prime Ministers, General Saleh Mehdi Amash, who is also Minister of the Interior, and General Hardan Abdel Ghaffar al Takriti, the Minister of Defence. They are

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both of them old hands at political intrigue, but whereas Ammash favours rapprochement with the Syrian Ba'ath and extreme measures, both against "reaction" abroad and opposition at home, and is supported by the left-wing and extremer members of the Party such as Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saddam al Takriti and Abdullah Sallum al Samarraï, Minister of Culture and National Guidance, Takriti, a highly skilled and opportunist tactician, with the bulk of the Ba'athist officers in the Armed Forces behind him, and the support of the President, is inclined, for his own purposes, to follow less radical and more traditional Ba'ath policies. So far the two men have been evenly matched, but Takriti, despite support in the Army, is mistrusted on account of the part he is alleged to have played in the fall of the régime in 1963, and it is noteworthy that he is not a member of the Regional Command Council. Were either ever to feel that they had the advantage they would no doubt move against the other in a repetition of the mini-coup of 30 July. If Takriti were to lose the President would fall with him.

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V. Conclusions

22. It must inevitably be concluded that this is a Government of few strengths and a great many weaknesses. No régime which is concerned primarily with the problem of its own survival is likely to govern well, and it suffers like so many others of its kind through having come to power by unconstitutional means and the police methods which it has to employ to remain there. Being conscious of its unpopularity and its minority status it tends to be uncertain, irresolute, and given to extreme propaganda and sporadic outbursts of violence against real or imagined opponents.

23. It has failed conspicuously to improve its image or consolidate its position by securing the support of other political groups, and it is intolerant of the slightest dissent in a country which, apart from other party differences, contains sizable minorities in the Kurds, the Shi'is and the Christians. Until it shows itself prepared to sacrifice some of its extreme ideology, and ready to compromise to a far greater extent than it has shown itself ready to do, it is likely to remain as isolated and as remote from popular support as any of its predecessors.

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24. As remarked above it is a highly elitist organisation which has almost no grass roots. Its system of recruitment and its structure set a premium on isolation and secrecy, characteristics which, however admirable and desirable they may be in opposition and under suppression, are no longer so in office. In some ways it suffers from much the same weaknesses as the old Wafd party in Egypt, a first class electioneering machine, but in power inefficient, corrupt and given to divisiveness.

25. In Iraq it has developed certain typical national characteristics. The fanatic streak always evident in its doctrine has developed into partizan violence in the tough climate of Iraqi politics, and it has become, even more so than in Syria, the facade for an authoritarian and opportunist military group for whom Ba'athism is largely a convenient political label, and whose nationalism is in complete contradiction to its pan-Arabism. Even less than in Syria does it rest on popular support, and it appears to have appealed most strongly to the bourgeois strata of Iraqi society, the middle class Army officers and professional men, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and university students. It is thus the party of a very

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small segment of Iraqi society. Prior to 1963 it was of no great importance and was regarded with something like contempt for its behaviour in power served only to deepen a popular dislike and distrust, which the present régime has done little to dissipate. The gap between the people and the Party, between its own ideology and the realities of the exercise of power, grows progressively wider. So long, however, as it can command military support of the sort suggested in paragraph 9 above it is likely to remain in power for what could be quite some time.

Middle East Section,  
FCO Research Department.  
5 August. 1969.

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**Annex A**

**The Regional Command Council in Iraq**

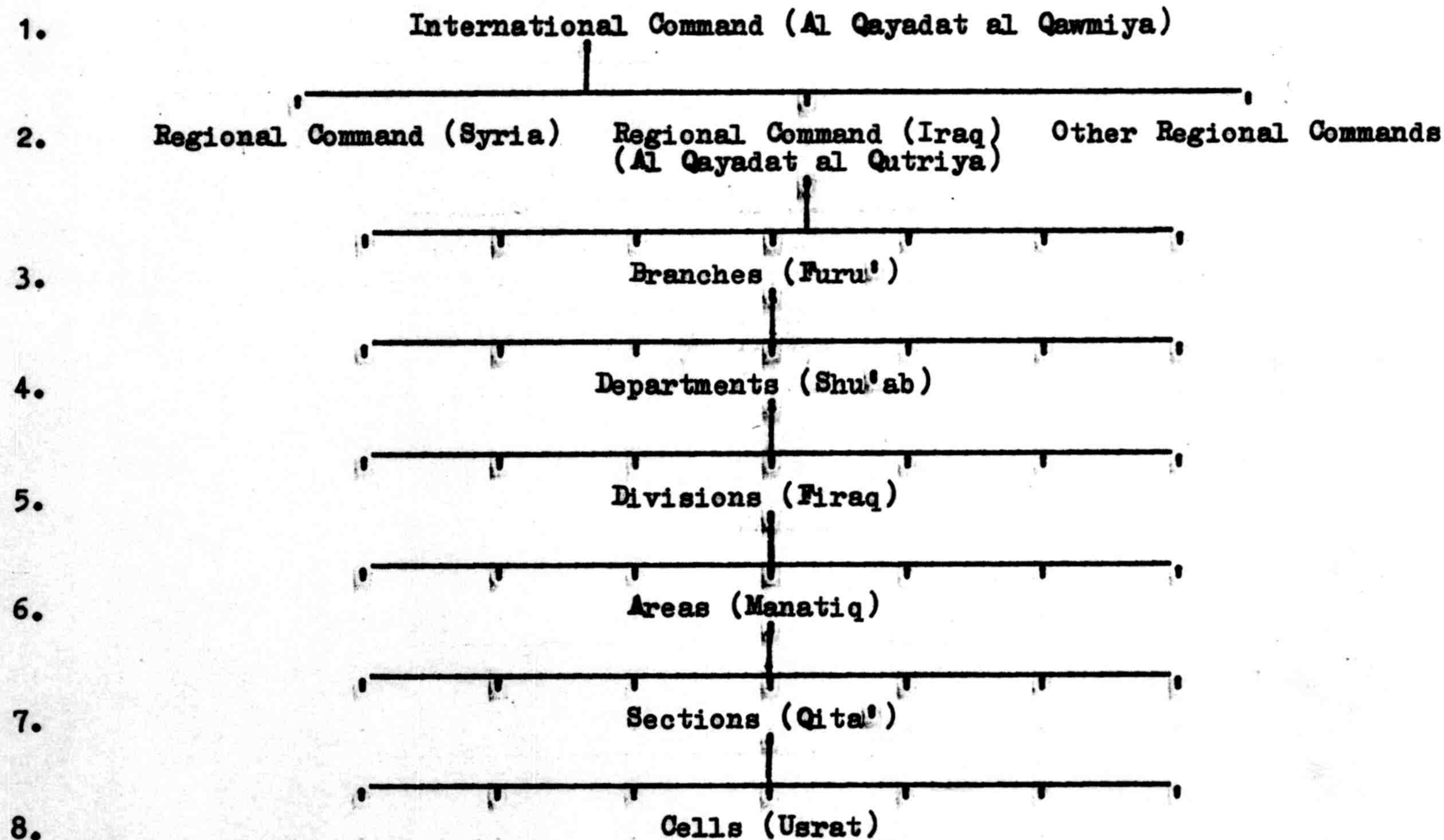
|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Ahmed Hassan al Bakr,                 | President and Prime Minister.                 |
| Saleh Mehdi Ammash,                   | D/Prime Minister and<br>Minister of Interior. |
| Abdel Kerim Abdel Sattar al Sheikhli, | Minister of Foreign Affairs.                  |
| Saddam al Takriti,                    | Secretary-General.                            |
| Abdullah Sallum al Samarraï,          | Minister of Culture<br>and Information.       |
| Izzat Mustapha,                       | Minister of Health.                           |
| Shafiq al Kamali,                     | Minister for Youth Affairs.                   |
| Salah al Takriti                      |   |
| Abdel Khaliq al Samarraï              |   |
| Murtada al Hadithi                    |   |
| Muhammed Mahjoub                      |   |
| Sami' Nagm                            |   |
| Naim Haddad                           |   |
| Kerim Shaitaf                         |   |
| Fallah al Takriti                     |   |
| Hamid Saigh.                          |   |

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Annex B

The Structure of the Ba'ath Party



1. Elected by International Congress of the Party.
2. Elected by Regional Congresses.
3. Secretaries of Departments and Party nominees.
4. Selected members of Divisions.
5. 3 - 6 Area members.
6. Selected Section leaders.
7. Cell leaders.
8. 3 - 5 members.



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(4)

13 August, 1969.

(RR 6/18)

Dear Chancery,

--- We enclose herewith a copy of the draft memorandum on "The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath" on which we should very much welcome your comments.

Yours ever, *Q.*

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT. *1/8*

The Chancery,  
British Embassy,  
BAGHDAD.

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**RESTRICTED**

**Research Department,**

⑤

**24 November, 1969.**

**(RR 6/18)**

**Dear Chancery,**

**We should be grateful if we could now have your comments on the draft memorandum on "The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath" sent under cover of our letter of 13 August.**

**Yours ever,**

**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**

**The Chancery,  
British Embassy,  
BAGHDAD.**

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British Embassy,  
BAGHDAD. ⑥

(1/4)

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|  |
| RECEIVED<br>REGISTRY No. 83<br>6 JAN 1970<br>RR 6/18                               |

20 December, 1969.

Dear Department,

④ We are sorry for our delay in sending comments on the draft memorandum on "The Regional Command of the Iraqi Ba'ath" sent under cover of your letter of 13 August and will forward them to you as soon as possible.

Yours ever,

CHANCERY 

Research Department,  
F.C.O.

**LAST PAPER**

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Draft Memorandum, 'The Regional Command Of The Iraqi Ba'ath (July 1968 - July 1969)'. Regional Command Of The Iraqi Ba'ath. 20 Dec. 1969. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 51/100. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107460100/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=64bbcf5e&pg=1](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107460100/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=64bbcf5e&pg=1). Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.